

REMARKS

Applicants submit this preliminary amendment prior to substantive examination of the pending claims. Claims 1-22 are pending in this case, claims 1-16 having been withdrawn as being directed to a non-elected invention. Claim 18 has been amended herein to correct a typographical error. Claims 23-29 have been added, support for which can be found in the specification on p. 5, line 2 through p. 7, line 8. No new matter has been added. The specification has been amended to correct errors and to add description of Figs. 8-10. No new matter has been added. Applicants respectfully request that the amendments herein be entered into the case and that the new claims be considered during substantive examination.

With respect to the errors in the specification, Applicants submit for entry an amended description of Figs. 8-10 in the "Brief Description of the Drawings" section of the application to more accurately depict the microphotographs as filed. With respect to Figs. 8-10, a paragraph has been added to the "Description of the Preferred Embodiments" section of the application to describe Figs. 8-10.

With respect to the claims, Applicants elected Group II (claims 17-22) in a Response to Restriction Requirement, filed December 4, 2002. Elected claims 17-22 are directed to a method for preparing an implantable prosthesis for loading into a delivery sheath. The proposed new claims 23-29 are directed to a prosthesis for endoluminal delivery. Because the subject matter of claims 23-29 indicates that the prosthesis be prepared in a like manner as that described in currently elected claims 17-22, Applicants respectfully submit that the newly proposed claims 23-29 are not directed to distinct inventions according to MPEP 806.05(f), and therefore request that they be included in the instant application.

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Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification and claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "Version with markings to show changes made".

In the unlikely event that the transmittal letter is separated from this document and the Patent Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, Applicant petitions for any required relief including extensions of time and authorizes the Assistant Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to Deposit Account No. 03-1952 referencing docket no. 297912003900.

Respectfully submitted,

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

In the Specification:

The three consecutive paragraphs on p. 4, beginning on line 20, have been amended as follows:

Fig. 8 [depicts a micrograph view of a cross-section] is a microphotograph of an esophageal stent-graft taken from one end, prior to collapse thereof for loading into a delivery apparatus [following alteration processing but prior to loading].

Fig. 9 [depicts a micrograph view of a cross-section] is a microphotograph of [the] an esophageal stent-graft [of Fig. 8 after it has been loaded into a delivery apparatus] taken from one end following collapse thereof, without having first been altered according to the present invention.

Fig. 10 [depicts a micrograph view of a cross-section] is a microphotograph of an esophageal stent-graft [loaded into a delivery apparatus without undergoing an alteration processing] taken from one end following collapse thereof, having first been altered according to the present invention.

In the Claims:

Claim 18 has been amended as follows:

18. (Amended) A method according to claim 17, further comprising the step of inserting a grooved mandrel of appropriate diameter into the prosthesis, wherein an interference fit between the mandrel and the prosthesis is established[;].